

Young Gita Camp Enshrines Values With Fun

BY PRIYA RAGHURAM

From Kindergarten to the eighth grade CMLA children gathered June 24-28 at Rameshwaram to learn about the Bhagawad Gita and selected topics and verses from it. The annual Young Gita Camp was a wonderful success with students, parents and the Acharyas all satisfied with the heady mix of learning and fun.

The camp began with prayer at the temple altar and invoking the blessings with the chanting of the Guru Stotram and performing of Gurudev's aarti. The children were then separated in 3 groups based on their grade level: k-2, Grades 3-5 and 6-8. Each group was taught by Viji Mahadev, Acharya Mahadevi and Swami Ishwarananda.

The focus was on chapters 13-18 and through various stories and anecdotes learnt about purusha and prakriti, difference between values and valueables, the 26 values of an evolved human being, etc.

At craft time, kids made masks – in white, red and black – to denote the three gunas and play acted accordingly! They also created their Eternal ID cards: one side with their picture and name and the other side with Lord Krishna's image denoting no matter what our physical form, we are all essentially the Lord!

There was music too. Mahadevi taught the kids "Hum Ko Man ki Shakti Dena" from the movie Guddi. And Swamiji composed the "Gita Song" inspired by the verses from the Gita set to the tune of the Christmas Carol, 'Dashing through the snow'!

As a fitting finale to the 18th chapter, the children learnt the importance of dedicating all actions to God - and working with the intention to serve the Lord through everything we do. On the last day, there was talent show where the kids sang bhajans, recited slokas, danced and played instruments to showcase their skills.

The camp wound down with a pizza and ice-cream party and kids wound their way back home with clear ideas on what constitutes good values, how they can live it and of course, great memories.



Guruji's Birthday Marked

June 30 at Rameshwaram was a day of festivity. Members gathered to celebrate Guruji Swami Tejomayananda's 62nd birthday. At Swami Ishwarananda's behest, the milestone birthdays (60 and 70 years) of long time devotees and active sevaks of CMLA was also celebrated on this day.

The morning began with the ayush homam conducted by Pt. Sivaramakrishnan. Acharya Mahadevi who turned 70 a few months ago, along with S. Balasubramanian, B. Jayaraman, Velu, Dr. Manohar Senra, Raj Mantha and Ganesh Venkat in the presence of their spouses and friends performed the rituals.



This was followed by the viewing of a wonderful video talk by Guruji on the Practical Applications of the Bhagawad Gita. His talk, full of understanding and humor was fully appreciated by all who sat glued listening to his words.

Swaranjali then performed a slew of bhajans that have been rendered by Guruji and were performed as a homage to him. Swaranjali members were recognized individually by Swamiji, who said that this was the right day to do so as Guruji loved music. Swamiji also referred to Guruji's talk pointing out that knowledge has to be assimilated and that comes with

clear devotion and conviction in the guru. This quality he said was clearly exemplified by Acharya Mahadevi.

Everyone was given boxed lunch prasad while the "birthday boys" and Dr. Srinivasa Iyer who will turn 80 this year, cut a badam cake brought in by Rekha Acharya and were treated to a home cooked meal that was made by their wives and served by sevaks.

It was a morning filled with gratefulness for the acharyas, their teachings and the joy of belonging to the family that makes up the CMLA membership.



The Birthday Boys



Graduation Ceremonies Held at Rameshwaram, CMLA Centers

Teachers were thanked and gratitude expressed toward the acharyas, as students completed another year at CMLA. Those headed off to college and now official CHYK members were alternately emotional at a chapter of their lives completed in balavihar and reflective on their years spent here learning.

Young students of BV meanwhile, came in with gifts and smiles for their teachers and left for their summer break promising to keep in touch with slokas learned and values imbibed. The graduation ceremonies at Rameshwaram and all satellite

centers saw full participation of families and they witnessed the symbolic passing of the lamp of knowledge from the Acharya to the youngest graduate.

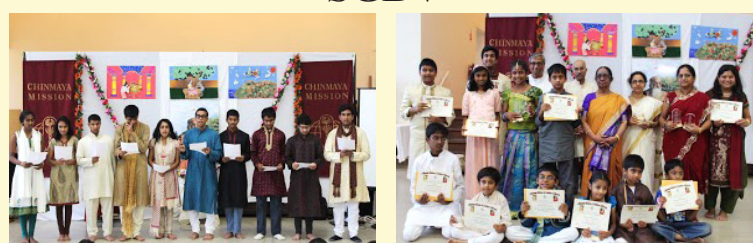
Winners and participants of the Gita chanting competition were recognized on the same day. Teachers and every volunteer who provide their time selflessly in making balavihar a smooth experience for all were deeply appreciated by the acharyas and were given tokens of appreciation for their contributions.

See pictures below:

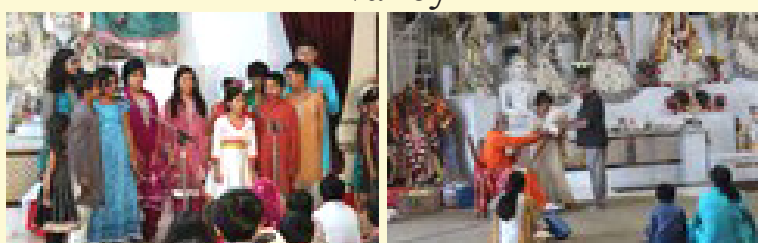
Rameshwaram



SGBV



Valley



OutReach Group Hosts First Event – A Picnic in the Park

BY SHALINI MANAKTALA

'Picnic in the Park' was held on June 23 at the Irvine Regional Park and fun was had by all-young and younger! It was hosted by CMLA's newly founded OutReach Group (ORG). ORG was formed to supplement existing CM programs and provide CM members and the community at large a space where all can learn, maintain, share and enjoy the riches of our Indian culture and roots—Bringing a little bit of Bharat, so to speak! ORGs goal and hope is to make Rameshwaram a vibrant hub and center for the community for activities reminiscent of home!

The picnic showcased some of ORGs programs geared toward kids being piloted at Rameshwaram this summer. The programs being introduced this summer are all centered around Indian culture—yoga, tabla, classical vocal, and art.

Picnic patrons—adults and kiddos—enjoyed yoga under the trees—a sample of what is being offered this summer for seniors and toddlers alike as 'Yoganjali.' Also showcased were art pieces by CMLA member Rita Tak who will be teaching art with an "Indian flavor" geared toward younger ones.

Wickets were knocked down and shuttlecocks flew as picnic goers partook in the popular sports of badminton and cricket. Badminton classes are already being taught at Rameshwaram on Sundays by member Amar Reddy. While playing at the picnic, Swami Ishwarananda spared none, defeating almost all who dared pick up a racquet to challenge him! And what's more reminiscent of India than a good ol' cricket match – there was enthusiastic participation in this too!

Across the picnic grounds, there was craft making and the little ones created loads of treasures to take home as a memory of a fun-filled day with parents and friends. When kids were not making masterpieces they were bouncing high in the bounce house and building and launching paper rockets even higher into the air—learning some basics of engineering under the guise of having a grand grand time. While kids were pre occupied, some moms enjoyed the henna booth and prettied up with patterns on their hands and feet.

When not playing, bouncing, or fellowshiping, all ate and enjoyed delicious Indian appetizers catered by Ashoka and lunched on pizza, sandwiches, watermelon and brownies and later cooled off with popsicles. Kids got sticky with freshly made cotton candy and parents and kids munched on salty homemade Indian potato puffs. All agreed they had a wonderful time.

For more information on summer offerings at CMLA : chinmayala.org or chinmayalaORG@gmail.com.



Youngsters Impress at Kalanjali Show

BY THANUJA.M

On the evening of June 9, Kalanjali presented dual performances by young artists: classical Hindustani music by Gaayatri Kaundinya and Kuchipudi dance by Dr. Yamini Saripalli.

Our first performer was Gaayatri Kaundinya who is currently studying Ethnomusicology at UCLA. The vocal concert began with a melodious Bageshree alap, Bada Khyaal, Chhota Khyaal and Tarana. It was followed by a Meera Bhajan – Preet Mata – in mesmerizing Khammaj raag, and a Kabirdas Bhajan – Beet Gaye – in Maand raag. Next was a Thumri, in the Narayani Gauriraag, followed by a Hori in Kafi. She concluded with a beautiful Sharada bhajan, in Mishra Pilu, with the lyrics and melody composed by her guru Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.

It was a treat to see three young artists on stage, singer and musicians alike, displaying their excellent individual talents, coupled with subtle complimentary qualities that unified their ensembles. Gaayatri has a stunning, powerful voice that quickly ensured that the audience would be in their seats for the entirety of the program. The way in which she carried herself further confirmed how dashing and knowledgeable she truly is.

The second half of the concert showcased another young artist, Dr. Yamini Saripalli. Yamini displayed her enormous talent in this ancient form of Kuchipudi dance.

Her opening piece was Swathi Thirunal keerthana Paripaali in Saaveri. The highlight was the Dashaavataram in Raagamalika, which displayed an array of ragams including Kalyani, AtanaDhanayasi, Saama, Shanmugapriya, Bilahari, Mohanam and Madhyamaavathi. Her perfect footwork, body movement, and stage presence were a feast to all, from dance enthusiasts to novices. Jayadeva's Ashtapathy in Raagamalika, showcasing Thilung, Aberi, and Sindhu Bhairavi was another breathtaking piece as it depicted Yamini's ability to present immense clarity in interpretation. The dancer concluded with a Jaavali in Kafi – Paru Lanna – which undoubtedly made the already impressed audience enjoy the performance even more. She performed with visible passion, ease of movement, and grace.



Kailash Yatris Gear Up.....San Jacinto Conquered by CMLA Members!

Several members of CMLA, including those setting off for the Kailash yatra, got together early on June 1 to drive off to Palm Springs and hike up San Jacinto. In a great mood of camaraderie, the group set off to get to the highest point possible. Everyone challenged themselves and strove to get to the highest possible point that they could physically get to. About 25 of them made it to the summit while others enjoyed the satisfaction of being able to handle the gradients and altitude. All of them reveled in the beautiful natural surroundings.

Kailash yatris also met at Rameshwaram to be briefed on travel and visa needs by tour manager and CM member Rashmin Paleja and Swamiji. The questions were many and included participation through webcast of others from around the U.S. and in India.



Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raghunathan: nimmicmla@gmail.com

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